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Chairman:	Mr. DEKANY (Vice-Chairman)	(Hungary)
later:	Mr. KRENKEL (Chairman)	(Austria)

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In the absence of Mr. Krenkel (Austria), Mr. Dekany (Hungary), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 96: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued) (A/47/131, 178, 280, 296, A/47/351-S/24357, A/47/364, 365, 391, 564, 569 and A/47/638-S/24772)

(a) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (continued) (A/47/12 and Add.1)

(b) QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS (continued) (A/47/91-S/23585, A/47/529 and Corr.1)

(c) HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued) (A/47/352, A/47/420-S/24519, A/47/455-S/24571 and A/47/540)

1. Mr. SCHATZER (Observer, International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that there seemed to be an ever-increasing gap between the ability of the multilateral system to perceive the complexity of the real causes of humanitarian emergencies and its ability to cope with the consequences. Many humanitarian organizations were facing major new challenges. Rehabilitation needed to be an integral part of strategic planning to address emergencies. Development agencies had become increasingly involved in the early stages of operations and contributed to both prevention and remedial action. For those reasons, IOM had decided to seek closer cooperation with the United Nations system and was looking to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs for multilateral leadership. Solutions for a number of ongoing emergencies were on the horizon and might actually materialize if the international community succeeded in rethinking its approach.

2. The mechanisms being developed by the Department, such as joint assessment missions and appeals, were a beginning. The unified approach to joint appeals should be strengthened in order to make them useful to both donors and executing agencies. That applied to assessment and formulation as well as follow-up and monitoring. There was an urgent need for enhanced coordination. IOM had outlined a plan to facilitate return. While the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had the primary responsibility with regard to returning refugees, the overall dimensions of the problem required a comprehensive approach involving bilateral and multilateral efforts. Assistance to Mozambique, for example, should be coordinated at a high level, and it was hoped that progress towards peace would make it possible to focus attention on that issue.

3. IOM was the operational partner of UNHCR in assisting the return of refugees to Afghanistan and South Africa. In Cambodia, his organization was

(Mr. Schatzer)

working with the United Nations system to facilitate development through the return of qualified nationals. Although the activities of IOM were coming to an end in Iraq it continued to monitor the situation there and would provide services to persons in need in neighbouring countries. In the former Yugoslavia, IOM was part of an inter-agency network providing assistance for the transport of refugees and former detainees to countries offering temporary safe haven. Those examples demonstrated the growing number of situations where movements of people called for IOM involvement and inter-agency coordination. There was a need to study the build-up of migratory pressures that might lead to humanitarian emergencies. In that respect, IOM hoped that a series of independent research networks set up in various regions under its auspices to study factors creating such pressure would enhance the United Nations early-warning capacity.

4. IOM took note of the recent plans to streamline the Organization's appeal structures and was looking forward to further cooperation with the United Nations field representatives, particularly in view of the limited effectiveness of Headquarters-based coordination.

5. Mr. IBRAHIM (Djibouti) said that since the beginning of 1991, his country had been receiving growing numbers of refugees as a result of the multiple conflicts in neighbouring countries and had set up reception camps for them inside its territory. The situation of the refugees in the camps was a cause of profound concern for his Government. The living conditions there were precarious because of a lack of facilities and humanitarian aid; and there were numerous cases of severe malnutrition among the children. The efforts undertaken by Djibouti in cooperation with UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP) had not been sufficient to cope with the problem.

6. Thousands of refugees lived in the streets of the capital in a state of total deprivation, without access to any foreign assistance. That situation had given rise to an unprecedented upsurge in crime and placed a very heavy burden on already limited resources and weak infrastructure. Djibouti's repeated appeals to the international community for assistance had gone unheeded. Djibouti was continuing to demonstrate compassion for the thousands of refugees in the country; nevertheless, his Government could no longer shoulder the burden alone without jeopardizing its own security and stability. It was imperative therefore for the international community to provide assistance. In order to stem the flows of refugees from Somalia, the relevant United Nations bodies, particularly UNHCR and WFP, with the support of the international community, should speedily establish refugee camps under their direct supervision in Somalia and provide for the basic needs of the refugees.

7. His Government called upon the United Nations system to find a solution to the problems of the refugees in Djibouti and mobilize additional resources. His country required the active assistance of UNHCR in order to find viable solutions to the problems of refugees in its capital. There was

(Mr. Ibrahim, Djibouti)

no alternative to their transfer to UNHCR camps in the countryside; however, the provision of adequate assistance was essential.

8. The power struggles and inter-clan conflicts in Somalia itself had caused the death of more than 300,000 people; and more than half of the population might die of hunger. In spite of the heroic efforts by humanitarian organizations and the resources provided by the international community, more must be done. The programme of action for Somalia should have the total support of the international community. The non-food sector, in particular, should be given the attention it deserved in order to increase emergency assistance to that country.

9. In spite of its modest means, Djibouti was also taking part in the international community's humanitarian efforts. Its port, airport and railroad played an important role in the shipment of food to Somalia and Ethiopia. Furthermore, his Government had provided food aid to Somalia and had recently sent a medical team to that country.

10. Mr. BIZIMANA (Rwanda) commended the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/47/12) and said that his delegation fully supported the position that though voluntary repatriation was the preferred durable solution to refugee problems, it could not be stable nor truly durable without meaningful reintegration rooted in national development and reconciliation.

11. Referring to paragraph 114 of the report, which discussed the problem of Rwandese refugees, it was clear that the drawing up of the Plan of Action had not yet been completed, despite the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration. His Government was troubled by the tendency to link implementation of the Plan of Action for Rwandese refugees to a cease-fire. Admittedly, the repatriation of Rwandese refugees could only occur once peace had been restored, but it was nevertheless imperative that the Plan of Action should be expedited so as to assist repatriation of those wishing to return immediately following the signing of the peace agreement currently under negotiation, and in the interest of national reconciliation and democratization.

12. Referring to the report of the Secretary-General (A/47/529), he drew attention to an inaccuracy in paragraph 21. As indicated in the High Commissioner's report (A/47/12, para. 114), studies had in fact not yet been carried out in Burundi and Zaire. The High Commissioner should endeavour to have those studies carried out as quickly as possible, since the implementation of the Plan of Action depended in part on them. In concluding, he said that his Government, with the help of the international community, was determined to resolve once and for all the problem of Rwandese refugees.

13. Mr. KÄÄRIÄ (Finland) said that his country fully supported the priorities outlined by the High Commissioner in her plan, including emergency preparedness, voluntary repatriation and promotion of solutions through

(Mr. Kääriä, Finland)

preventive measures. UNHCR should take full advantage of recent favourable political developments to expand its repatriation programmes. Special attention, however, should be given to the situation of returning refugees, who required support through comprehensive economic, social and political programmes. Development agencies and non-governmental organizations should be involved in order to ensure the best conditions for integration.

14. Preventive measures should be higher on UNHCR's agenda and should be an integral part of its mandate and planning. Special attention should be given to volatile regions where there was a danger of mass displacements. Institution building, training and information were important practical components of such measures. His Government supported all efforts to find a political solution in the former Yugoslavia and stressed that humanitarian measures were indispensable. He expressed appreciation for the coordinated efforts of UNHCR and various organizations in assisting people in that region, often under the most dangerous conditions. It was of paramount importance to provide massive humanitarian aid to prevent further human suffering during the coming winter, especially in Bosia and Herzegovina. With regard to Somalia, the United Nations system had not been able to tackle the problem in the best possible way, owing to the complex problems in that country. Efforts to find appropriate political and humanitarian solutions should be urgently stepped up.

15. The mandate of UNHCR had been flexible enough to permit it to operate in complex, so-called "refugee-like" situations. In such cases, requests should in future also come through the Secretary-General. Assurances should also be given to UNHCR that it would receive the necessary human and financial resources; and better mechanisms should be developed to protect legitimate asylum-seekers. Lastly, Finland expressed full support for the Office in carrying out its demanding tasks.

16. Mrs. DA SILVA (Venezuela) underscored the need to reconsider the definition of a refugee, taking into account the one set forth in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the new factors resulting from the complexities of the current situation and the relevant provisions of the Cartagena Declaration. In that connection, her delegation supported the work carried out by the Working Group on Solutions and Protection established by the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, the seven categories of persons associated with the search for asylum and refuge, and the 21 recommendations put forward by the Group.

17. Venezuela had received 2,000 refugees from various parts of the world, and was taking steps to enact legislation for the application of the international instruments on the status of refugees. Her Government had informed UNHCR that it was prepared to receive 300 to 500 refugee family groups for relocation. It was gratifying to learn that UNHCR continued to make progress in implementing its Policy on Refugee Women and that the Guidelines on Protection of Refugee Women had been introduced to guide field workers in identifying needs. Venezuela welcomed the appointment of a Senior

(Mrs. Da Silva, Venezuela)

Coordinator on Refugee Children and commended the support provided in that regard by the Norwegian Government.

18. She noted with satisfaction that further progress had been made in the process set in motion by the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA) in order to promote lasting solutions. The holding of the Central American Regional Forum on Refugees, Uprooted and Returnee Women (FOREFEM) had been a positive step. Venezuela supported the UNHCR strategy aimed at prevention, preparedness and finding solutions as well as the idea of promoting cooperation with other United Nations human rights bodies in order to strengthen the prevention component. Although the consideration of humanitarian measures might lead to political solutions, it could not replace political agreements. Venezuela also supported the measures taken to ensure a more active response to emergency situations, which had considerably increased in number in the past year. The cooperation between UNHCR and UNDP in formulating projects for productive activities was useful. Lastly, Venezuela supported the idea of strengthening the institution of asylum, which was becoming increasingly important in view of the ongoing mass violations of human rights.

19. Mr. ROGERS (Belize), speaking on behalf of the 12 members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that in 1992, there had been a mass movement of people fleeing economic hardships, poverty, human rights violations and internal strife. The members of CARICOM were particularly concerned about Haiti, where widespread abuse of human rights and a deterioration in the economic and social conditions had caused more than 20,000 people to flee. The Twelve expressed appreciation for the invaluable contribution of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees towards alleviating the plight of Haitians.

20. The treatment of refugees and displaced persons should go hand in hand with the protection of their fundamental human rights. Wherever possible, States should apply the standards set forth in the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol. In the case of women, the Twelve noted encouraging progress in the implementation of the Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women, who along with children, constituted the largest group of refugees.

21. CARICOM member States agreed that voluntary repatriation of refugees was the preferred durable solution. In 1992, 1.5 million refugees had returned to their countries of origin voluntarily. But repatriation was successful only if conditions in the country of origin were conducive to integrating the refugees into social and economic development. The noted improvements in the refugee situation in Central America and Indochina were directly connected to the success of comprehensive regional approaches to refugee problems. The International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA) had been particularly effective in assisting repatriation.

(Mr. Rogers, Belize)

22. CARICOM member States were pleased to note that voluntary contributions to UNHCR had risen substantially in 1991, but considered that the current level of support should be maintained to ensure adequate financing. There was a special need for increased funding in emergencies requiring UNHCR's immediate response and also for the provision of assistance to developing countries of temporary and permanent asylum. CARICOM member States encouraged closer cooperation with non-governmental organizations in areas of relief assistance and developmental projects.

23. His Government's policy was geared towards the protection of refugees, who constituted 20 per cent of the population of Belize, and their integration into its multi-ethnic society. Integration had proved very successful, as the majority of refugees and displaced persons were dispersed throughout Belize. None the less, his Government also honoured requests for voluntary repatriation. The Government was convinced that CIREFCA had had significant successes in Central America and, with the assistance of UNHCR and other relevant United Nations agencies, had played an integral role in voluntary repatriation and had contributed immensely to regional peace. In view of the new challenges that would have to be met in the areas of repatriation, integration and protection, his Government urged the international community to lend firm support to the continuation of the CIREFCA process over the next two years.

24. Mrs. KABA CAMARA (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the refugee problem was universal, thus requiring a global approach. The situation in the Persian Gulf and Central Europe, particularly in the former Yugoslavia, coupled with the worsening conflicts in the Horn of Africa and Liberia, had stifled the optimism created by the end of the cold war that conflicts would be settled peacefully and followed by increased repatriation. Refugees could only be protected with the cooperation of the Governments concerned, although the overall problem was the responsibility of the entire international community.

25. The high number of refugees in the developing countries created intolerable pressure on their fragile economies. In Africa, it further jeopardized the precarious socio-economic situation in the host countries, where people were already struggling for survival. The international community therefore had a moral obligation to provide emergency assistance. It should also encourage integrated development with a view to preventing tension between local populations and refugees.

26. Her delegation wished to draw attention to the plight of refugee women and children, who constituted some 80 per cent of refugees and needed extra help. It had therefore welcomed the appointment of the Senior Coordinator for Refugee Women.

27. Côte d'Ivoire already hosted some 300,000 Liberian refugees. However, its attempts to resolve the conflict in Liberia had been ruined by the intransigence of some parties, which had led to the resumption of

(Mrs. Kaba Camara, Côte d'Ivoire)

hostilities. Voluntary repatriation thus interrupted, her country was likely to experience a further influx. The members of the Economic Community of West African States needed international support for their efforts to bring peace to Liberia, particularly regarding the implementation of the Yamoussoukro IV Agreement, and to cope with the flow of refugees.

28. Faced with the tragic situation in Somalia, the international community should make up for lost time and intensify its efforts to save lives; measures must also be taken to protect convoys carrying humanitarian aid. As for Bosnia and Herzegovina, which merited special concern in view of the approaching winter, she hoped that the negotiations begun in London would be successful, thereby enabling its refugees to return home.

29. The international community should take measures aimed at deterring perpetrators from committing the intolerable human rights violations and atrocities often accompanying the conflicts which were a major cause of refugee movements. Natural disasters, which also created refugees, tended to provoke a much more rapid and generous reaction than phenomena of a less immediate character, such as the drought afflicting parts of Africa. Yet nature could be conquered if the peace dividends resulting from disarmament were used to preserve the environment and revitalize desert regions.

30. Since the refugee problem was exacerbated by regional conflicts, her country welcomed the revival of activity in the Security Council since the end of the cold war. Leaders in countries affected by refugee movements should be willing to enter into negotiations and renounce force; a total embargo on arms transfers in such areas would also be helpful. That was the responsibility of the entire international community, which should respect the relevant Security Council resolutions. The preventive measures advocated by the Secretary-General in "An agenda for peace" (A/47/277-S/24111) would also be useful.

31. The international community also had a duty to ensure that all countries had decent living conditions, which would help to stem migrations. By ignoring the situation, the rich countries, which were equally liable to experience refugee invasions, were mortgaging their own futures. It was therefore in the universal interest to support sustainable development in the developing countries.

32. Voluntary repatriation could only occur in conditions which guaranteed dignity and security. A general amnesty could calm fears among repatriated persons concerning the possible loss of freedom once they returned home, while satisfactory housing and employment would encourage them to return voluntarily.

33. She commended the promising results obtained by the countries of Central America on implementing the Esquipulas II Agreement, which demonstrated that determination and political will always bore fruit. The international community should redouble its efforts to create conditions throughout southern

(Mrs. Kaba Camara, Côte d'Ivoire)

Africa which would speed up the return of refugees to their countries of origin. Above all, however, lasting peace should be restored, while repatriated persons should have guaranteed safety. Finally, her Government wished to thank the various organizations and Governments assisting the Liberian refugees; their representatives worked tirelessly in difficult conditions, often at risk to their own lives.

34. Ms. AL-HAMAMI (Yemen) praised UNHCR efforts to help the Yemeni authorities and the Red Crescent to cope with the influx of refugees in her country and reinforce the UNHCR office in Sana'a to face the emergency situation. Moreover, in response to General Assembly resolution 46/174, which had called for special assistance to Yemen, various international organizations had assisted in such ways as coordinating humanitarian aid and providing medicines and supplies. As indicated at the round-table meeting held in Geneva in June 1992, the large influx was a priority issue which required help from donors. She hoped that her Government's specific requirements would be discussed at meetings with donor States in Sana'a.

35. Her country believed, however, that the degree of suffering was still greater than the amount of aid it had hoped to receive. Refugees continued to flood into the main towns, creating additional pressure on food supplies and basic services, and worsening the unemployment situation. She enumerated her Government's efforts to cope with the crisis, which had provoked a state of emergency. They included the allocation of funds to those who assisted returnees and the creation of employment opportunities.

36. Finally, underlining the recommendation in document A/47/283 that the Government of Yemen should continue to receive support from the international community, she said that financial and technical assistance would enhance Yemen's ability to cope with the socio-economic needs arising from the large influx of refugees and returnees.

37. Mr. TÜRK (Slovenia) said that the unprecedented 18 million refugees in the world represented a considerable burden for the host countries and called for a more equitable sharing of that burden. The international community must work actively to remedy the plight of refugees and asylum-seekers and also to eliminate the root causes of the refugee flows.

38. The armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina had caused enormous human suffering and material destruction. A pattern of mass exoduses was now occurring and was pushing the affected areas of Europe into long-term poverty and instability. The general situation of refugees world wide and in areas neighbouring Slovenia was a serious cause of concern.

39. His Government had previously given notification of its succession to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. However, the mass exodus from the former Yugoslavia into Slovenia went considerably beyond situations envisaged by the drafters of the Convention and the Protocol. His Government had, inter alia, devoted a large portion of its

(Mr. Türk, Slovenia)

budget, most of its commodity reserves and all emergency buffer stocks to assisting the refugees. His Government commended the efforts of UNHCR to provide humanitarian relief in the former Yugoslavia and expressed gratitude to other international and national humanitarian organizations for their assistance to refugees in Slovenia.

40. At the International Meeting on Humanitarian Aid for Victims of the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia, held in July 1992, his Government had proposed the establishement of safety zones in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Those zones would prevent the so-called "ethnic cleansing" and help to keep refugees as close to their homes as possible. His Government was prepared to assist in organizing accommodation for the refugees in such zones but thus far it had been impossible to set up the zones owing to the failure of international efforts to stop the fighting in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

41. Mr. LIU Zhixian (China) said that the decisions and conclusions adopted by the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme at its forty-third session provided a generally objective view of the current refugee situation and its root causes, and gave guidance for future work.

42. The grave refugee problem was closely related to world peace and development. The international community should make a concerted effort to combat foreign aggression, colonialism and racial discrimination and to ensure respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs so as to remove the political root causes of the problem. Meanwhile, it was important to restructure the existing unjust international order, narrow the gap between the South and the North and help developing countries to develop their economies.

43. UNHCR should continue to adhere to its humanitarian and non-political role. Refugee work should be free of ideological debate and politicization. While assistance to refugees and displaced persons in all regions should be stepped up, the international community should not scale down assistance to those who desperately needed help in Asia, Africa and Latin America, where the majority of such persons were to be found. The problem should be addressed in a spirit of shared responsibility. Traditional donors were urged to increase their humanitarian assistance and others to contribute generously. The international community should try to help the many developing countries that were receiving refugees.

44. UNHCR had been particularly effective in repatriating refugees and in assisting and protecting women and children. His delegation supported the Office's emphasis on improving its ability to respond to emergency situations, and favoured the proposal that the resolution of refugee problems should be combined with development assistance and environmental protection. Practicality should be a guiding principle at all stages. The International Meeting on Humanitarian Aid for Victims of the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia and the recent conference on assistance to Somali refugees should contribute greatly towards enhanced international assistance to refugees.

(Mr. Liu Zhixian, China)

45. In recent years, China had been taking an active part in assisting refugees, in accordance with its obligations under the 1951 Convention. It had admitted and resettled 300,000 Indo-Chinese refugees and was providing assistance to other refugees on a bilateral and multilateral basis. It had made substantial donations of medicines and other relief supplies to the Somali people and had decided to contribute $50,000 for humanitarian assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina. In conclusion, he said that China would continue to strengthen its cooperation with UNHCR and other relevant bodies.

46. Mr. MELAMED (Israel) commended the work of UNHCR and in particular, its efforts to secure international protection for refugees, and agreed with the High Commissioner on the difficulty of applying preventive strategies while ensuring the fundamental rights of human beings to live free of hunger and fear.

47. Of the many humanitarian issues facing the international community, developments in Yugoslavia, reminiscent of past history had struck a special chord in Israel. The Israeli leadership had taken immediate action, dispatching a member of the Knesset on a fact-finding mission, holding a special debate in the Knesset and sending a relief consignment of food and medical supplies for the population of Sarajevo. Private and public organizations had sent relief supplies, and a delegation of Israeli Muslim leaders had gone to Croatia to examine the best forms of assistance to Muslim refugees from Bosnia. Israel had received nearly 500 refugees from the former Yugoslavia as immigrants and had given some 250 temporary asylum.

48. The conflict in Yugoslavia and the famine in Somalia should serve as a warning to all mankind, especially at a time of hope for a new era of peace and understanding. The timely provision of emergency aid at the right place must be followed up by UNHCR efforts to rehabilitate the refugees.

49. Israel, whose population was largely made up of refugees, to whom should be added 400,000 immigrants in the previous three years, could but support UNHCR operations and share its own experience.

50. Mr. MONTAÑO (Mexico) said that the changing global situation since the end of the cold war, resulting in complex new refugee flows, called for a thorough, urgent re-examination of the work of UNHCR in order to avoid one-sided interpretations warranting recourse to the so-called right to interfere on the pretext of some new international humanitarian law. The refugee situation was indissociably linked to human rights and development, and UNHCR's renewed mandate must therefore be based on economic recovery.

51. Credit was due to UNHCR for its work, particularly in the massive repatriation of refugees. International solidarity was needed in order to provide refugees with asylum and protection until they were able to return to their homes in safety and dignity. UNHCR's commendable new threefold strategy, focusing on emergency preparedness, prevention and solutions, also

(Mr. Montaño, Mexico)

pointed to the need for a further refinement of its mandate. The principles underlying such action must be respect for the human rights of displaced persons, on the one hand, and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, on the other. UNHCR must be given an enhanced role in inter-agency coordination for humanitarian assistance. His delegation welcomed the holding of the recent International Meeting on Humanitarian Aid for Victims of the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia, which had highlighted the non-political and humanitarian character of UNHCR and its resolve to address new refugee problems. In the current context, UNHCR's role should be broadened to include other categories, such as the flows of internally displaced persons.

52. The need for a prompt response to new massive refugee flows must not lead to neglect of critical refugee situations in other parts of the world. The Government of Mexico was continuing to participate actively in the implementation of the Plan of Action of the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA). Substantial progress was being made towards the pacification of the region, which would ultimately lead to the resolution of the refugee problem, thanks largely to the political will shown by Governments, especially that of El Salvador. That will was reflected in the agreements reached by the CIREFCA Follow-up Committee, demonstrating the Governments' resolve to find durable solutions to the problem of displacement, seen as indissociable from human rights, peace, democracy and development. His delegation consequently welcomed the decision to extend the Plan of Action until May 1994, and urged the international community to participate in the important follow-up process by continuing to provide political and financial support for CIREFCA programmes. The extended mandate of the CIREFCA process should enable its results to be consolidated in the near future through a more active role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in integrating refugee and returnee issues in the region's development programmes.

53. Mr. SIRELKHATIM (Sudan) reiterated that, despite its economic difficulties, his country had spared no effort in carrying out its firm moral and legal commitment to the protection of large numbers of refugees from neighbouring countries. Underlining its cosponsorship of the draft resolution on the continuation of UNHCR for a further five years, he agreed that refugee emergencies should be dealt with by early preparedness, more effective coordination between the relevant agencies and a balancing of the interests of the countries concerned.

54. Citing the failed voluntary repatriation of Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees, he said that if further complications were to be avoided, international efforts were now even more essential to address the serious obstacles which had caused the impasse. His delegation fully agreed that the gap between relief and development, which were inextricably linked, should be closed. The relevant agencies should therefore coordinate their work to such end, an approach also apparently favoured by the authorities in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

(Mr. Sirelkhatim, Sudan)

55. His delegation commended UNHCR plans to address, together with other agencies, questions related to environmental degradation in the areas hosting refugees in the Sudan. Meanwhile, his country would continue to cooperate with UNHCR until voluntary repatriation became a reality. Underlining matters of concern to his delegation, he said that the complex refugee problem in the Horn of Africa had created situations which, being beyond UNHCR's traditional mandate, had broadened its activities to encompass an innovative multi-dimensional approach. Voluntary repatriation was a matter of choice, and the protection and well-being of refugees was the continued responsibility of international humanitarian efforts for as long as such situations existed, regardless of any treaty clauses to the contrary. Attaching great importance to the voluntary and orderly repatriation of Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries, he hoped that the necessary assistance for their repatriation and reintegration would be provided. Additionally, in continuing to explore all peaceful means of ending the civil strife in the southern Sudan and to address the root causes of past displacements, his Government hoped for cooperation between all parties and looked forward to a further round of peace talks in Abuja.

56. He strongly reiterated his Government's request to UNHCR to exercise its responsibilities towards Sudanese refugee children, whose continued plight of abduction, conscription and exploitation by the rebel movement required an urgent humanitarian response in order to secure their safety, repatriation and reunification with their families. His Government was still awaiting a report from UNHCR on the disappearance of thousands of those refugee children from their camp. Finally, he reiterated the Sudan's proposal for an international conference on the refugee problem in the Horn of Africa, which it would be happy to host.

57. Mr. Krenkel (Austria), Chairman, took the Chair.

58. Mr. HUSLID (Norway) said that, during 1992, the demands on UNHCR had been unprecedented owing to events which had caused serious refugee situations to occur in various parts of the world. Although there was now wider scope for international action to deal with the root causes, large-scale repatriation would pose major challenges to UNHCR and the international community. The complexities of those challenges had been on the agenda of the recent annual session of the Executive Committee in Geneva. As indicated by the highest-ever attendance of Governments at the session, refugee problems were of universal concern.

59. His Government hoped that the General Assembly would echo the broad support given to the High Commissioner's innovative approach in implementing the threefold strategy of preparedness, prevention and solutions. It also supported her efforts to act as a catalyst vis-à-vis the United Nations system and relevant outside partners, and welcomed the close working relations with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in complex emergency situations.

(Mr. Huslid, Norway)

60. Norway welcomed the move towards more comprehensive international responses. Above all, political initiatives were needed in order to address the root causes of displacement. There was a need for close coordination between political bodies and humanitarian agencies, and his delegation fully supported the High Commissioner's efforts to maintain the issues of displacement on the political agenda while preserving the non-political and humanitarian approach of the Office. With due regard for their respective mandates, there should also be closer contact between UNHCR and United Nations human rights machinery.

61. As demands grew, UNHCR was depending more than ever on the cooperation and financial support of the international community. Burden-sharing should be the overriding principle guiding such action. One way in which UNHCR's operations could be supported might be for Governments to develop stand-by arrangements for secondment of personnel. In the previous year Norway had, by special agreement, been able to provide competent staff to several UNHCR emergency operations.

62. The search for durable solutions lay at the heart of UNHCR's mandate. Traditional solutions were still valid, but priority should be given to facilitating voluntary repatriation. UNHCR had a leading role to play in mobilizing concerted international action and ensuring safe return through access and monitoring. Lack of infrastructure, the gap between relief and development and concerns about protection underscored the need for comprehensive and innovative approaches. Norway called for the strengthening of regional approaches involving the participation of the countries concerned in an inter-agency, intergovernmental and non-governmental framework from the planning to the implementation stage. Lessons could be drawn from the CIREFCA process in Central America and the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees. Traditional distinctions between refugees, returnees and affected population, including the internally displaced, should not be stressed. Norway had promoted that approach to the Mozambican situation and hoped to see it actively pursued.

63. The protective function of UNHCR was carried out within a complex legal framework. Refugee law must, however, be complemented by humanitarian law and human rights. Efforts to prevent flows of refugees must go hand in hand with full respect for the institution of asylum. Large groups of persons also needed temporary protection outside their country of origin as was the case in parts of the former Yugoslavia. Norway called on all States concerned to cooperate in eliminating all forms of "ethnic cleansing". It had offered temporary protection to released prisoners of war and their families, but stressed the right of those persons to return to their country of origin.

64. Norway would continue to lend its strong support to UNHCR. In conclusion, he said that the safety and security of personnel participating in relief operations, in situations of great risk, was the responsibility of all the parties involved.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.